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HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF
MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS
First meeting
New York, 28 June 1997

REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS ON THE WORK OF ITS FIRST MEETING

INTRODUCTION

1. The first meeting the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its decision 19/32 of 4 April 1997, was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on Saturday, 28 June 1997.

I. OPENING OF THE MEETING

2. The meeting was opened by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at 10.45 a.m. on Saturday, 28 June 1997.

3. Welcoming participants, the Executive Director said that the first session of the Committee, which was primarily organizational, was of high importance in initiating a process of revitalization of the United Nations Environment Programme, building upon the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP. The meeting provided an opportunity for a preliminary exchange of views on the implications for the future role and functioning of UNEP of the outcome of the recently concluded special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21. It was also important that the Committee should exchange views on its future functioning to facilitate a policy-oriented dialogue on important global environmental issues. The Committee had a heavy future agenda: it had been mandated to consider the international environmental agenda and to make reform and policy recommendations to the Governing Council; to provide guidance to the Executive Director on emerging environmental issues; to enhance the collaborative work of UNEP with other bodies, in particular the convention secretariats; and to support the mobilization of adequate and predictable financial resources for UNEP for the implementation of the global environmental agenda. Given those

responsibilities, it was imperative that, at the current meeting, the Committee should initiate a process for the revitalization of UNEP. For its part, the UNEP secretariat would work with enthusiasm as a partner with the Committee in its important task of providing the international community with an effective instrument to address the pressing environmental issues and to ensure the future viability of the planet into the twenty-first century.

II. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

A. Attendance

4. The meeting was attended by the following 31 members of the Committee, who had been nominated by their respective regional groups in accordance with the procedure agreed on by the Governing Council at its nineteenth session: 1/ Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burundi, China, Cuba, Czech Republic, El Salvador, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Togo, Senegal, Switzerland, Uganda, United States of America, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

5. The following States Members of the United Nations or members of a specialized agency or of the International Atomic Energy Agency were represented by observers: Antigua and Barbuda, Austria, Bahrain, Benin, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Eritrea, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Madagascar, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Oman, Panama, Portugal, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Venezuela.

6. The European Community was also represented.

7. The President of the Governing Council, Mr. Arnoldo José Gabaldón (Venezuela) also attended the meeting, pursuant to paragraph 2 of Governing Council decision 19/32.

8. The Chairman of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Environment Programme, Mr. T.P. Sreenivasan (India), had also been invited to attend the meeting, in accordance with paragraph 2 of Governing Council decision 19/32, but was unable to do so.

9. The following United Nations bodies, Secretariat units and convention secretariats were represented: Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Office to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNSO), United Nation Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), United Nations

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1/ Speaking on behalf of the Western European and Others Group, the representative of Ireland announced that, because no agreement had yet been reached on the five remaining nominations from the Group for membership of the Committee, the States members of the European Community would participate in the current meeting as observers.

Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Secretariat for the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Secretariat of the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

10. The following United Nations specialized agencies were represented: International Maritime Organization (IMO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), World Health Organization (WHO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was also represented.

11. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: League of Arab States (LAS), Organization of African Unity (OAU), Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Permanent Commission of the South Pacific (CPPS).

12. The following non-governmental organizations were represented: European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), International Centre for Environmental, Social and Policy Studies (ICESPS), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), International Federation of Women Lawyers, Sierra Club, World Wide Fund for Nature, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), World Conservation Union (IUCN), World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO).

13. The full list of participants is annexed to the present report.

B. Election of officers

14. The Committee elected the following officers by acclamation to serve as its Bureau:

Chairperson:	Mr. Chen Chimutengwende (Zimbabwe)
Vice-Chairpersons:	Mr. Wang Zhijia (China) Mr. Pavel Suian (Romania) Mr. Philippe Roch (Switzerland)
Rapporteur:	Ms Maria Julia Alsogaray (Argentina)

C. Adoption of the agenda

15. The Committee adopted the following agenda, on the basis of the provisional agenda (UNEP/HLC/1/1):

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Organization of work:

   (a) Election of officers;

   (b) Adoption of the agenda and organization of the work of the meeting.

3. Outcome of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly with particular relevance to UNEP and with implications for the future work of UNEP, including its programme of work.

4. Programme of work of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials for the period 1997 through 1999.

5. Provisional agenda, date and place of the second meeting of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials.

6. Other matters.

7. Adoption of the report.

8. Closure of the meeting.

D. Organization of work

16. The Committee decided that the meeting would be informal, organizational, and brief.

III. OUTCOME OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY WITH PARTICULAR RELEVANCE TO UNEP AND WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE WORK OF UNEP, INCLUDING ITS PROGRAMME OF WORK

17. In considering agenda item 3, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director (UNEP/HLC/1/3), which had been prepared on the basis of the information available to the secretariat at the time of its finalization and was based on the outcome of the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, held in New York from 8 to 25 April 1997.

18. Introducing the item, the Chairperson noted that the Executive Director's report had been prepared before the special session of the General Assembly. He suggested that the Committee might have a preliminary exchange of views on the actual outcome of the session as it related to UNEP and that the secretariat might prepare a more comprehensive and analytical document for the consideration of the Committee at its next meeting.

19. In the ensuing discussion, many representatives stressed the importance of the Committee in enhancing the role of UNEP as the lead environmental agency in the United Nations system, a role that had been reaffirmed by the General Assembly at its recent special session. Several of those representatives pointed to the need to strengthen UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, one of them also suggesting that the regional aspects of the UNEP programme should be strengthened at the same time. One representative said that there was a need to enhance the role of UNEP as a leader in the scientific world for the formulation of policies in response to new environmental problems.

20. Several representatives underlined the coordinating role of UNEP, as well as its role in supporting convention secretariats, in providing an environmental input to the Commission on Sustainable Development and the overall United Nations agenda and in ensuring coherence on environmental issues.

21. One representative, supported by a number of others, said that the main purpose of the current meeting should be to provide a forum for the discussion of procedural matters with a view to establishing a solid basis for the work of the Committee. The basic task of the Committee was to enhance the capacity, profile and legitimacy of UNEP to enable it to perform the role assigned to it by Governments. It was the moral and political responsibility of participants to see to it that the Committee became an effective forum for international dialogue aimed at identifying environmental issues and policy options and promoting and catalysing international environmental cooperation. Another representative, stressing the role of UNEP in catalysing environmental law and promoting sustainable production and the technology transfer, said that the purpose of the High-level Committee was to ensure political vitality and predictable financing for the organization.

22. Another representative, noting the striking consensus at the special session of the General Assembly on freshwater as a major topic for the Commission on Sustainable Development to address in a substantive way, said that UNEP had a major role to play on freshwater issues and suggested that the Committee could set up a working group to develop an approach for UNEP's contribution on the subject. The outcome of the Committee's deliberations could then be taken up by the Governing Council, which might take decisions for the subsequent consideration of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its 1998 session. Such procedure, which could be used for other topics besides freshwater, appeared to be a way in which the Committee could serve a very useful purpose.

23. One representative pointed to the need for the Committee to approach all its tasks in a structured way. Working groups should be established to cover each of the Committee's main areas of responsibility, as set out in paragraph 1 of decision 19/32.

24. One representative expressed the view that the Committee could not deal exclusively with environmental issues as such, since the future of UNEP depended on the general process of reform in the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations system as a whole. His delegation therefore might not only include members from the authority technically responsible for environment but also from representatives responsible for the United Nations agenda for reform.

25. Several representatives said the question of funding of UNEP should be placed on the agenda of the Committee at its next meeting and that a working group should be established to consider mechanisms for the mobilization of resources. One representative, urged that a working group to consider ways to make UNEP's core funding adequate, predictable and stable should be established immediately and could report back on its preliminary findings to the Committee at its next meeting. Several representatives stressed the role of the Committee in matching priorities to funding available and in ensuring the efficient use of scarce resources. One of those representatives said that it was important to have a carefully focused work programme for UNEP based on the comparative advantages that UNEP could offer over other organizations. Another representative said that the guidance given on funding must be realistic.

26. A number of representatives supported the suggestion to establish a working group on freshwater. Some representatives, however, said that the issue of water should be considered as a whole at the global level, and freshwater should not be dissociated from oceans and coastal areas and marine resources. One representative, while agreeing that freshwater was one of the areas that the Committee should address as a matter of priority, said that his country favoured an integrated approach to land and water resources and noted that the UNEP drylands programme had a particularly important role to play in that context.

27. Other topics suggested for consideration by the Committee included energy and renewable sources of energy, tourism and the environment, transfer of environmentally sound technology, sustainable transport, trade and the environment, the urban environment, poverty alleviation, unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, forests and the preparations for a convention on the subject, capacity-building, industry and the environment, and desertification.

28. One representative, while supporting the establishment of working groups to address emerging environmental issues, expressed the hope that the topics selected would be consistent with the agenda of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

29. One representative, supported by several others, said that the question of priority-setting should be left until the secretariat had prepared a comprehensive document containing the relevant information and an analysis of the discussion on programmes, priorities and institutions held at the special session of the General Assembly. The same representative also cautioned against the bureaucratization of the Committee through a proliferation of working groups, while another stressed the need to avoid a scattering of resources and duplication of effort among such groups, which would result in a weakening of UNEP. Another representative said that the establishment of new committees would not be a useful idea and suggested instead that UNEP, in discharging its tasks, could consider the establishment of task forces within the secretariat.

30. Several representatives expressed support for the strengthening of the regional activities of UNEP.

31. One representative stressed the need for cooperation between UNEP and UNDP, particularly in light of the potential availability of funding for the environmental sector, as well as between UNEP and the World Trade Organization and international financial institutions.

32. Another representative said that the next meeting of the High-level Committee was of great importance for discussing the future programme of work and the reform of UNEP, taking into account the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly, and requested the secretariat to ensure that the relevant documentation was distributed well in advance.

33. Following the exchange of views, the Committee decided, on the proposal of the Chairperson, that, in order to prepare for the next meeting of the Committee, the Bureau should meet inter-sessionally to draw up a list of priorities for that meeting and that the secretariat would prepare a comprehensive and analytical report on the implications for UNEP of the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly, for the consideration of the Committee.

IV. PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS FOR THE PERIOD 1997 THROUGH 1999

34. In considering agenda item 4, the Committee had before it a report prepared by the secretariat concerning a possible programme of work for the Committee for the period 1997 through 1999 (UNEP/HLC/1/4).

35. The Chairperson noted that the question of the programme of work of the Committee had been addressed in the discussion under agenda item 3. He was sure that good note had been taken of all the comments and suggestions made in the discussion and that the secretariat would incorporate them in a revised report to be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

36. Several representatives emphasized that any task forces or working groups established by the Committee must be driven by Governments with the support of the secretariat, rather than the other way round.

37. One representative said that there were three areas for which working groups should be established: the reform of UNEP; the rules of procedure of the High-level Committee; and policy issues, including those relating to the substantive issues that had been referred to in the discussion under agenda item 3. The working groups should be composed of representatives of countries that were committed to such work and should report back to the Committee itself.

38. Another representative said that it was important for UNEP to give priority to the strengthening of South-South and North-South cooperation programmes, particularly in view of the fact that in his country environmental degradation was jeopardizing peace. It was also important to flag the role that UNEP could play in promoting the exchange of information on the successes and problems of developing countries. He also believed that UNEP could play a role in encouraging strategic and productive alliances that were mutually advantageous for both the developed and the developing countries.

39. Another representative suggested that the following topics might be considered if the Committee were to establish a group to deal with reform: whether UNEP was organized to fulfil the mandate given to it by the Governing Council at its nineteenth session; the use of programme planning rather than budget planning – often in UNEP, the decision on the programme was taken after the decision on the budget allocation, rather than the other way round; what would be the best relationship between UNEP and the convention

secretariats and how would it be possible to ensure that the secretariats were supported to the best of the capabilities of UNEP; how could UNEP ensure that its linkages with other parts of the United Nations system were as good as they could be and that the system used for those linkages was the right one; how did UNEP deal with outside interests and experts that could help strengthen its programme, something that should be considered systematically to make sure that UNEP had the best expertise available.

40. Another representative reiterated that there was a need to avoid the creation of additional bureaucratic structures in establishing working groups. Since the High-level Committee should have different functions than, for example, those undertaken by the Committee of Permanent Representatives, he believed that it would be most appropriate to have ad hoc groups to carry out specific tasks in order to prepare for high-level discussion in the Committee, one example being the suggestion that there should be some specific preparation for the discussion of the financing of UNEP. Otherwise, his delegation would be willing to wait for the results of the Bureau's consideration of the subject.

41. The Committee decided that the question of its programme of work should be left to the Bureau, which, with the assistance of the secretariat, would present proposals to the Committee at its next meeting.

V. PROVISIONAL AGENDA, DATE AND PLACE OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS

42. All representatives who addressed the question of the venue of the next meeting of the Committee were of the opinion that it should be held in Nairobi at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme.

43. On the question of the timing of the meeting, some representatives were of the view that, given the heavy schedule of environmental meetings towards the end of 1997, as well as the need to ensure the highest possible level of participation, it should be held in January 1998, immediately prior to the special session of the Governing Council to review the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly. Other representatives took the view that the meeting should be held in advance of the special session of the Governing Council, possibly in November 1997, in order to preserve the inter-sessional nature of the High-level Committee and to allow time for reporting to the Council. One representative, while not indicating any preference for a particular date, said that the timing should be in accordance with the decision of the Governing Council, must not conflict with any other major environmental meeting, and must be convenient for ministers. He suggested that the final decision should be left to the Bureau.

44. The Committee agreed that its second meeting should be held in Nairobi, as provided for in decision 19/32, and that the Bureau, with the assistance of the secretariat, should be entrusted with the task of preparing the provisional agenda for the meeting.

45. It was also agreed that the Bureau, in conjunction with the secretariat, should be entrusted with the task of selecting a suitable date for the second meeting of the Committee, taking into account the overall calendar of environmental meetings.

46. The representative of Australia said that it would be useful if the Bureau could circulate the relevant documentation well in advance of the second meeting of the High-level Committee in order to ensure that participants were well prepared for the discussions. His Government would be willing to provide any support it could to assist the Bureau in order to achieve that goal.

VI. OTHER MATTERS

Status of implementation of the Mercure satellite telecommunications system

47. One representative said that it was important for UNEP to obtain all possible support in order to fulfil its mandate and, in that context, sought confirmation that the Mercure satellite telecommunications system was now operational and that the promises made to the Governing Council at its nineteenth session had indeed been followed up.

48. Another representative said that her country planned to provide $15 million over the coming three years for, among other things, cleaner production and information technology. A substantial part of those funds would go to the work of UNEP in those two areas. She was therefore particularly interested to hear the answer to the question raised concerning the status of implementation of the Mercure satellite telecommunications system.

49. In reply, the Executive Director said that the Mercure system was not yet operational. The necessary facilities were in place around the world but consultations were still being held with the Government of Kenya. She had, however, been informed that productive meetings on the subject had been held in Nairobi the previous week, but the matter had not yet been completed.

50. The representative of Kenya said that the policy issues regarding operation and establishment of the Mercure system had been disposed of comfortably between the host Government and UNEP. What remained to be resolved were non-policy issues of a technical nature, including those relating to maintenance and operational aspects. Following the meetings the previous week, action would be taken speedily to settle the issue of registration with the International Telecommunication Union, which had to be done by the host Government in conjunction with UNEP. He assured the Committee that, at the moment, the only outstanding issues were small, technical ones that needed to be addressed by technicians and not by a policy-making body such as the High-level Committee.

51. The representative who had initially raised the question of the status of the Mercure project said that, from the information provided by the Executive Director and the representative of Kenya, there would appear to be no problem for the secretariat to provide to the High-level Committee at its next meeting information on the establishment of Mercure. He was sure that, at a policy-making level, the High-level Committee would be very gratified to hear that the system was up and running and would therefore welcome such a report.

Establishment of a trust fund to facilitate the participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in meetings of the High-level Committee

52. One representative drew attention to paragraph 15 of Governing Council decision 19/32, by which the Council invited Members of the United Nations and members of its specialized agencies to consider providing financial assistance to facilitate the participation of developing countries and in particular the least developed among them, as well as countries with economies in transition, and to establish a trust fund to that end. He proposed that the Bureau should consider how such a trust fund was to be established and how the problem of participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in meetings of the High-level Committee was to be solved in the future.

53. In response, the Executive Director said that the procedure for establishing the trust fund had already been set in motion and she would report on progress made in the near future.

Contributions to the Environment Fund

54. The representative of the United States of America said that her country, which had withheld its contribution to the Environment Fund, had gone ahead and made it in the light of the creation of the High-level Committee and in the hope that it could be made into a success.

55. The representative of the United Kingdom said that in the light of the manifest success of the current meeting and the fact that a clear way forward for UNEP had been charted, the United Kingdom would reinstate as soon as possible the full amount of its pledged contribution to the Environment Fund for 1997, which had previously been suspended.

56. The representative of Spain said that Spain would also be paying its 1997 contribution to the Environment Fund, which it too had withheld.

57. One representative of a country that had increased its contribution to the Environment Fund, supported by one other representative, appealed to prospective donors outside the group of traditional donors in the Western European and Others Group to contribute even small amounts to the Environment Fund. Such a broadening of the resource base would not only help assemble a great political and moral commitment in support of the work of UNEP but could also help ensure the implementation of the programme approved by the Governing Council.

Statement by the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean

58. In a statement delivered on their behalf of the representative of Colombia, the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean present at the meeting and having attended the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 expressed their disappointment at the fact that, five years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the considerable efforts made by their nations had not been matched by a similar commitment to the achievement of sustainable development on the part of most developed countries. They noted with great concern that the opportunity afforded by the special session to provide new momentum to the Rio process had not been fully exploited. Discussions at the session had failed satisfactorily to address issues critical to the Latin America and Caribbean region, including poverty alleviation, the needs of small island developing States and those of the Central American countries faced with the

challenge of the consolidation of peace as a condition for sustainable development, as well as the conservation, management and sustainable use of biological diversity. Moreover, negotiations on means of implementation had indicated an unwillingness on the part of many developed countries to bear their share of the burden associated with preserving the integrity of the planet for present and future generations. In particular, appropriate compensation for the global service rendered by the natural resources of Latin America and the Caribbean had not been forthcoming, nor had the necessary environmentally friendly technology found its way to their countries. Nevertheless, the spirit of Rio remained in the region.

59. Sustained economic growth and sustainable development were the priorities of the region, and, in that context, the Ministers reaffirmed the great need of their countries to improve access to markets while maintaining effective and appropriate environmental policies. For that purpose, an open, equitable and transparent trading system was essential. The Ministers rejected trade policy measures for environmental purposes which constituted a means of arbitrary and unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction of international trade, and particularly unilateral measures which undermined international law.

60. National and regional efforts towards sustainable development needed to be supported by meaningful international cooperation within a coherent institutional framework in which the comparative advantages of the various agencies and bodies of the United Nations system were exploited to the fullest possible extent. The Ministers reiterated the critical roles to be played by a strong UNEP, as the leading environmental agency of the United Nations, and by the Commission on Sustainable Development, as the main forum for the coordination of sustainable development policy at the international level. Finally, the Ministers renewed their pledge to lead their countries in the quest for sustainable development and reaffirmed the concepts and the decisions contained in the Declaration of Buenos Aires.

Decision-making on organizational matters

61. One representative, noting that, at the end of a rather lengthy discussion on the previous agenda items, the issues had been referred to the Bureau and the secretariat, expressed the hope that in the future such issues would be decided upon directly by the Bureau itself and not brought before the High-level Committee for decision.

VII. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

62. In view of the time constraints at the meeting, the Committee decided to entrust the Rapporteur, in consultation with the secretariat, with the preparation of the report of the meeting. The Committee also noted that paragraph 6 of decision 19/32 provided that the report of the meetings of the High-level Committee of Ministers and Officials should be made immediately available to all members of the United Nations Environment Programme. The present report has been prepared in accordance with that decision.

VIII. CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

63. The Executive Director said that she had been very pleased to notice that the specific subjects that had been addressed during the exchange of

view in the Committee had been drawn from the UNEP Global Environmental Outlook, which had, in particular, highlighted such topics as freshwater, oceans, and energy. She was gratified that those issues had been mentioned at the current meeting as significant areas for future consideration.

64. She was also particularly pleased with respect to the strong support expressed for a discussion on adequate and predictable funding. Expressing her gratitude to those representatives who had made statements about funding, she recalled that UNEP had recently been facing a severe cash-flow crisis, and it had been necessary to put extreme measures in place to address it. Combined with the fact that funds had been withheld and that, on the explicit instructions of Governments, UNEP had been required to keep the cash carry-over from one year to another to a minimum, circumstances had become very difficult. She expressed her particular gratitude to the handful of Governments that had come to the rescue and had advanced funding in full and early. On the question of the expansion of the resource base of the Environment Fund, she said that, in the past month, the contributions received had come from Botswana, Cyprus, Hungary and Mozambique. That represented a very supportive statement of the breadth of concern that there was for the organization, which did not just belong to one particular group of countries. On the other hand, she continued to be concerned about the trend: of the eight leading economies in the world, three had neither pledged nor made a contribution for 1997, and it was already nearly half way through the year. Those were the same three Governments that were calling for a strengthening of the organization. At the same time, for three particular regions with a significant number of countries and with significant economies, the total contribution was less than $250,000 per region. That indicated a certain credibility gap between calls for strengthening UNEP and giving UNEP the tools to be able to do the job. Notwithstanding the immediate cash-flow problem, it was extremely difficult to meet the mandate that had been so strongly given to UNEP, particularly as a result of the previous week, without the financial resources to do the job. Therefore, in thanking those Governments that had made strong statements of support, she said that she would continue to speak out on the issue of adequate and predictable funding as UNEP moved forward to be the sort of organization that Governments wanted it to be.

65. Finally, on behalf of the secretariat, she expressed her gratitude to all those who had contributed so effectively to ensuring the progress that had been made at the meeting, by electing a Bureau with which the secretariat would work most expeditiously and productively. She also thanked all those who had extended their stay in New York after the special session of the General Assembly and for making the meeting such an important success and an important symbolic act with respect to the revitalization of the organization.

66. In his closing statement, the Chairperson said that the level of participation at the meeting was an indication of a commitment to an enhanced role of UNEP in environmental matters. He believed that the current marginalization of UNEP would end immediately: UNEP would become the leading global authority on the environment within the United Nations system and there should be no rival authorities or organizations formed to duplicate its work. It was also clear that UNEP should effectively play a coordinating role for all environmental conventions and institutions in the United Nations system, a role that the reform process should enable it to assume.

67. The Chairperson then declared the first meeting of the Committee closed at 1.55 p.m. on 28 June 1997.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

GOVERNMENTS

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
MEMBERS	
Algeria	Mr. **Mohamed El-Hadi Bennadji** Secretariat d'Etat de l'Environnement M. **Abderrahmane Merouane** Counsellor
Argentina	Sra. **Maria Julia Alsogaray** Secretaria de Recursos Naturales y Desarrollo Sustentable Presidencia de la Republica Sra. **Elsa Kelly** Director General of Environmental Affairs Ing. **Mario Maini** Senor Director de Fortalecimiento institutional de esta Secretaria Dra. **Andrea Brusco** de esa misma area Senora **Maria Luisa Siboni de Kikuchi** Senor **Horacio Fernandez Palacios** Mision Permanente de la Republica Argentina ante los UN
Australia	Hon. Senator **Robert Hill** Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories Mr. **Roger Beale** AM Secretary, Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories Ambassador **Howard Bamsey** Amb. for the Environment Dr. **Margaret Clarke** Assistant Secretary, International and Coordination Branch Mr. **Atticus Fleming** Adviser, Officer of the Minister for the Environment

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Australia (continued)	Mr. **Geoff Tooth** Executive Officer, Environment and Antarctic Branch Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade Mr. **Laurie Hodgman** Policy Adviser, International Unit, Environment Australia Mr. **Ian Forsyth** Assistant Secretary, Environment and Antarctic Branch, Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade
Bahamas	H.E. **Lynn P. Holowesko** Ambassador for the Environment Commonwealth of the Bahamas Office of the Prime Minister P. O. Box CB 11980 Nassau, N.P.
Bangladesh	Her Excellency **Syeda Sajed Chowdhury** Minister for the Environment and Forest (Leader) H.E. Mr. **Anwarul Karim Chowdhury** Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN (Alternate Leader) H.E. Dr. **M.A. Qader** Bangladesh High Commissioner, Permanent Representative to UNEP, Nairobi Mr. **Muhammad Ali Sorcar** First Secretary Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to UN, New York
Bulgaria	Professor Dr. **Emil Marinov** Deputy Minister of Environment Mr. **Z. Basmajiev** First Secretary Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the UN
Burundi	H.E. **Gamaliel Ndaruzaniye** M. **Jean-Baptiste Hajayandi** Second Counsellor
China	Mr. **Wang Zhijia** Director General Department of International Cooperation, NEPA Head of Delegation Mr. **Yue Ruisheng** Divisional Chief International Cooperation Dept (NEPA)

COUNTRY	PARTICIPANTS
Cuba	Sra. **Rosa Elena Simeon Negrin** Ministra, Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnologia Y Medio Ambiente Dra. **Gisela Alonso** Directora Politica Ambiental Ministerio de Ciencia Tecnologia y Medio Ambiente Dr. **Jorge Mario Garcia Fernandez** Director Centro de Educaion Ambiental Ministerio de Ciencia Tecnologia y Medio Ambiente Sra. **Ofelia Ramos Zamora** Asesora de la Ministra de Ciencia, Tecnologia y Medio Ambiente de la Republica de Cuba
Czech Republic	Mr. **Vladislav Bizek** Deputy Minister of the Environment Mr. **Bedrich Moldan** Counsellor to the Ministry of Environment Mr. **Jan Ka'ra** Ministry of Foreign Affairs
El Salvador	Mr. **Miguel Eduardo Araujo Padilla** Minister of the Environment and Natural Resources of El Salvador
Egypt	Mr. **Amr Ramadan** Oifficer-in-Charge, Economic Section Cabinet of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. **Tarek Genina** Director of Environmental Technical Assistance office of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency Mr. **Amr El-Sherbiny** Environment Division Ministry of Foreign Affairs
India	Mr. **Vishwanath Anand** Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forests Mr. **Nirmal Andrews** Joint Secretary Ministry of Environment & Forests
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MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS
First meeting
New York, 28 June 1997

REPORT OF THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS ON THE WORK OF ITS FIRST MEETING

Corrigendum

Paragraph 4

(a) line 4: delete Bulgaria,

(b) line 7: after Romania, insert Russian Federation,

Paragraph 5

(a) line 4: after Brazil, insert Bulgaria,

(b) line 7: delete Russian Federation,

Page 15

The entry for Bulgaria should be deleted and inserted before the entry for Canada on page 22.

Page 26

The entry for the Russian Federation should be deleted and inserted before the entry for Togo on page 19.

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